

# Preparing for the future – Recovery of the culture and media sector from the COVID-19 Pandemic

From [Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media](#)

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Good morning colleagues. My name is Catherine Martin. I have recently assumed responsibility for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media in Ireland. I am delighted to be here today and I look forward to meeting you in person when possible.

I want to thank the German Presidency for hosting today's meeting and for its work over the past five months in progressing important regulatory and policy matters in what have been extremely challenging circumstances due to the pandemic.

I also wish to thank the Presidency for the items it has raised in the policy paper circulated for discussion today. While we collectively continue to experience the dreadful impact of the COVID pandemic on life, society and economy across Europe, there is now cause for cautious optimism that early 2021 will see the rollout of vaccines.

In that regard, I welcome this opportunity to discuss how the unprecedented scale of supports being put in place under the proposed Multi-Annual Financial Framework and under Next Generation EU can help the culture, creative and media sectors to both recover in the short term and ensure their resilience and sustainability in the longer term. It is imperative that this funding package is agreed as soon as possible.

It is important to first acknowledge that the Creative Europe Programme is and remains the central instrument to support and develop the cultural and creative sector at EU level. The 50% proposed increase in funding for the Creative Europe Programme 2021-2027 and the proposed front-loading of that funding in the early years of the programme will go some way to assist the cultural, creative and media sectors to survive and begin their recovery.

However, the pandemic has starkly highlighted the vulnerabilities of the culture and creative sector in terms of performance, production and mobility, the lack of which have decimated income and opportunities. Creative Europe alone cannot rebuild one of the sectors most negatively impacted at this time.

That is why this debate is timely and important. As Minister for Culture and Media, I support more coordinated and targeted information for the culture and creative sector on other EU

funding programmes and greater inclusion of the sector in relevant EU programmes and recovery instruments, such as the Recovery and Resilience Facility and REACT EU.

On the first point, the development of a targeted and managed information portal to inform the culture sector and national programme managers of relevant EU funding programmes certainly merits further examination. Any such portal should include information on the synergies between funding programmes and the sectors that could apply for calls for projects. For example, the recent Erasmus+ call for strategic partnerships to boost creativity and culture was well publicised in Ireland and generated significant interest from the culture and creative sector. However, to be truly effective, greater access to information needs to be matched with greater provision of training, capacity building and networking opportunities for applicants and national programme managers to ensure that scheme requirements and the application process are fully understood.

On the second point, Ireland is implementing the new EU ‘traffic lights’ approach to travel, which will give more certainty to cultural operators in respect of travel for work. Furthermore, and in line with what I have already set out, Ireland supports more structured access by the culture sector to relevant EU programmes and the recovery facility. EU programmes and the recovery facility are based on a clean, green recovery, on renewable energy consumption, on enhanced connectivity, digitalisation, on reskilling and up-skilling. The culture sector has a key role to play here. The pandemic has demonstrated the agility of the sector. It is reinventing itself by up-skilling, training in digitalisation and drawing on its creativity to survive.

Culture not only has a deep intrinsic value, it is also a vital cog in the economy providing employment and contributing to productivity. Its value to health, wellbeing, lifelong learning, its place in addressing and raising awareness of the major issues of our time such as the pandemic, the climate crisis and the sustainable development agenda need to be appreciated and utilised. Recognition within and more structured access to other EU programmes and the recovery facility will facilitate this.

In addition, it would be also beneficial if greater discretion is allowed regarding state aid rules in order to help Member States provide targeted supports to the media and other affected sectors.

In the wake of the Informal Council meeting on 8 April last, the Ministers from 26 Member States issued a Declaration which among other things, proposed that aid provided by EU funds and programmes reaches the cultural and creative sector and contributes to their recovery. We, as Ministers for Culture and Media must be a strong voice for the sector. We must work at EU and at national level to ensure that they can access all relevant EU supports and can survive and thrive as we emerge from the pandemic.

Colleagues, this has been a year like no other. The performing arts have and continue to be among the most negatively impacted sectors. In this debate we are future focussed on the recovery of the culture sector and in that context, may I suggest we consider how we can celebrate the return of live performance when it is safe for all Member States to do so. Perhaps a simultaneous concert from re-opened venues across Europe to bring us together, lift our spirits and showcase our wonderful artists and the diversity of our shared culture.

Thank you.

